

To the Editor of the Times ^{12 p 1 p new 49}

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"The Educational Aspect" — of Education

An account of an experiment

Sir — Mr. Sadler in his profoundly instructive Report upon Secondary Education in Germany (Special Reports upon Educational Subjects), speaks of the "unrest" which ~~marks~~ marks public opinion in that country on the subject of Secondary Education. We have for long been disturbed by this "unrest," to which The Times has from time to time given adequate voice. Recent events have accentuated our uneasiness, the British Association has done the nation good service by giving due prominence to a subject which is in everybody's thoughts. Professor Armstrong's Presidential address, Section I, is illuminating & suggestive & hardly less instructive as those of Professors Purser & Perry.

The fact is, we all know that a change of front is necessary, & we are all ready to promote such a change provided that it be something more than ^{mere} ~~an~~ experiment. I have some reason to think that Headmasters & Masters of Preparatory Schools are among the persons most ready to fall in with a sound reform, but, just because these gentlemen

have wide experience highly trained intellects, they are unwilling to launch changes which have not a philosophic basis as well as a utilitarian end.

The Parents' National Educational Union, in whose behalf I write, has been more than once invited by Headmasters & others to use its influence towards bringing about a reform in the matter of what Mr. Sadler calls "mark hunger", which has, of course, its raison d'être in examinations.

Perhaps you will allow us to offer our modest quota of suggestion towards meeting the present distress, seeing that during the fourteen years of our existence the principles we set forth have been adopted more or less, by thousands of parents of the middle & upper classes, have influenced or directed the education of some thousands of their children.

Speaking on the subject of Secondary Education in Kendal last year, Archdeacon Wilson said that our education was defective for lack of aim. Now the P.N.E.U. exists because it has a definite aim & exists solely for the purpose of carrying out that aim. Some 14 yrs ago I had the honour of founding this Society for the purpose (though I was too diffident to announce the fact) of enforcing a few educational principles which I had

found to be possessed of an amazing power of memory. These principles have been enunciated in one or two volumes, in the Panels Review (the monthly organ of the Union), in various pamphlets, at our Annual Conferences and at the meetings of some forty Branches of the Union scattered up & down the country.

I need not here speak of the few principles which form a sufficient guide to us in the general up-bringing of children; but that which guides us in what is commonly called education, ~~namely~~ namely, the imparting of Knowledge - ~~but~~ perhaps you will allow me to unfold. It seems to me that it may possibly be found to contain the key to our failures in the past & a guide to reform in the present.

To adapt the phrase of Matthew Arnold concerning Milton, - education should aim at giving Knowledge touching with emotion.

Andersson Bremer has a charming episode in Neighbors, where two school boys become so impassioned as to the merits of their respective heroes, - Charles XII & Peter the Great I think, that they must needs fight a duel to settle who was the greater, stealing their father's sword for the purpose. I believe, even a drop of blood was shed.

Parents may congratulate themselves that their children

run no such risks today. We do not have heroes; we have markos. Knowledge for us is not "touched with emotion" unless it be that of personal acquisitiveness. Formulation, let boys & girls care, or have it in them to be, as generous & enthusiastic as ever they were. That so many leave school absolutely without interest except it be that of preparing for a further examination, or the absorbing interest of games, is no doubt the fault of education as we practise it.

Human beings, ^{we know} come into the world with certain desires, each with its appropriate object all working together for the development

at the meetings of some forty Branches of the Union scattered up & down the County.

I need not ~~thus~~ speak of the few principles which form a sufficient guide to us in the general up-bringing of children; but that which guides us in what is commonly called Education - ~~viz~~ ^{namely} - the imparting of Knowledge - perhaps you will allow me to unfold. It seems to me ^{in any possible degree} that it contains the key to our failures in the past - & a guide to reform in the future. ^{presently} To adapt the phrase of H. A. concerning religion - "education should aim at forming Knowledge touched with Emotion."

Frederika Bremer has a charming episode in Neighbors, where two school-girls become so impassioned as to the merits of their respective heroes, Charles xii & Peter the Great, Minsk, that they must needs fight a duel to

excelling, of wealth, of society, of Knowledge.
 Now the latent fault of our education is, it
 seems to me, that the loss of knowledge as a
 spring of action is ignored in every way,
~~not~~ expressed; while emulation, the desire to
 excel, ~~also~~ avarice, the desire of wealth,
 (expressed for the schoolboy in marks, prizes
 scholarships) are the two springs of action
 which are unceasingly played upon. The
 result is, as Mr. Ruskin puts it, - 'they cram to
 pass & not to know, they do pass & they don't
 know', we talk about "flannelled fods" &
 the rest of it, as if the ~~phenomenal~~ phenomenal
 dullness & paucity of interests in our young
 people were their own fault.

The remedy I have to suggest is such a
 men washing in Jordan that I should not
 venture to describe it but that it has
 been found efficacious, as that washing

We believe that the appetite desire, for knowledge is as natural as the appetite for food; only that, being a desire not an appetite, it is insatiable.

We believe that children, after infancy, are as capable of dealing with knowledge as with food (during infancy, for that matter, but that is not our business).

Therefore we give them knowledge without watering down or pepborising, but we give them living knowledge, not desiccated, dogma dust. We take no trouble about their 'faculties' because we find that in normal children these act as spontaneously. The organs of mastication & digestion.

We find that a various diet of knowledge, simply served, is as wholesome & nourishing as a various diet of food. Therefore our programme of

work, even for children of seven, is full & various, with the stipulation that the child has long leisure & short working hours. But that 'touch of emotion' which vivifies knowledge, we find in the perception that human beings come into the world with a thousand latent affinities, for each other, for art, for nature, for all men everywhere in the past & the present, for all places everywhere, for material to work in, for Rinsfolk & friends, for Almighty God. ~~The~~

The business of education, we hold is to put them in the way of ^{developing &} establishing these affinities.

Subsides of living, expansion, expression, service & leisure, for each of us, depend upon how far we apprehend these relationships & how many of them we

papers sent in bring

lessons. The examinations ~~bring~~ ^{bring} no howlers, but show intelligent & joyous grasp ^{almost} of every subject studied. When boys & girls go to school after such home training, master's mistresses speak well of them, & they grow up intelligent, responsive persons with many interests.

Boys are prepared for preparatory schools; girls usually remain in the school until they are of an age to specialise.

Again, we have a Training College, chiefly ~~for~~ designed for ladies who wish to become governesses in families. Here, again, there is abundant vitality, ~~many~~ keen interests & an intelligent & discriminating outlook upon life. But the Training College is outside the question, except that the teachers are trained to take a back seat - to forgo the affable archangel manner with ^{their pupils} ~~children~~ & to treat them always,

as reasonable being & fellow-learners.
 Oral lessons are sparingly given & lectures
 never. Not the teacher, but Books & Things
 are our direct instruments of education.
 The Training College has a Practising School, small
 because it is intended to be somewhat on the
 lines of a home schoolroom. There are about
 forty ^{some of them will be children} ~~teen~~ pupils ranging in age from six to 17.
 The ~~children~~ ^{infants} are not picked, & do not do by any
 means brilliant things; but they are natural
 persons, interested about many things, & able
 to work. Things of this kind happen from
 day to day. A boy of 9 had ^{seen} ~~found~~ a plant, whose
 name he wanted to add to his flower list.
 He described it to his teacher & asked what
 it was. "I can't tell from your description",
 she said, "draw it on the blackboard." He
 did, leaves & flower. "Oh, that's the
 common sedge", she said, & he put it down.

Again, the girls of a higher class asked their teacher not to give them a lesson on a rather difficult chapter in Freni's Shorter History of England because they said they understood so much better when they read for themselves. Again, a student was about to give a criticism lesson on "Composition" so she stated in her notes, "He read the children a tale from Kipler's Heroes, & was about to write the tale on the black board at the dictation of her class, calling on the children to correct each other's language, put in stops etc. This was contrary to our method, so she received a private hint to let the class ^{9³¹} narrate the tale, which they did perfectly, one following another. There was not time for all, so the 3 children of from 9-10 were told to write the rest ^{at home} which they did with a touch of Kipler's style, though not in his words, & in complete cly sentences with full stops."

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The teaching of Composition is tabooed. I am not ~~not~~ singing a paean on the P.S. of the H.O.E. but concerning the results that come from the use of books & things.

We all know children of the kind, who are brought up in homes where books are freely used. My point is that our education ~~has~~ ^{commonly} ~~split upon 3 weeks~~ fails from 3 causes:

(a) the oral lesson, which a bit more is very poor waddle, rat's test is ^{beaten by the} inferior to the same subject treated by an original mind in the right book. ~~The~~ ^{But} the right books exist, old new, in countless numbers, but extreme care is necessary in the choice.

(b) The lecture, commonly the result of cramming up from various books with rapid notes on the teacher's part, resulting in hasty notes after-

munds written out & again crammed up by the pupils; often careful though well-illustrated but never equal ^{in directness & reality} to the direct contact with the original mind of one able thinker who has written his book on the subject in hand. &

(c) the text-book, which has been compressed & recompressed from the big book of the big man, until nothing is left but dust, incapable of nourishing any living soul.

Our hope for the future is, that the teacher shall no longer pose as the high priest of all knowledge, the dealer out in morsels ~~to his class & that~~, but that the children of all classes & all ages from six ^{years} upwards shall have as their own possession for their own use books & the best books, many books.

That the contents of their books shall not be explained to the point of dispute but that they should be left many things to ponder over, that the questioning in the class shall be chiefly on the part of the children, who will want to know if they are let alone; that appliances, which we are on the way to regard as a royal road to education, shall be reduced to a minimum (a rough & ready diagram, sketch, or plan made with ruler & compass, a ink bottle is far more effectual than the most elaborate model because it appeals to the constructive imagination of the class); that handicrafts, work in material of ^{several} ~~many~~ kinds, shall be universal; that a joyous physical education shall make a light ^{whole} movement a delight.

That the ~~key~~ of appreciation, if not of production
 in the arts should ^{all} be made open wall by
 judicious preparations that nature knowledge
 should ^{all} be common property, not at all by
 way of object lessons in Science, but solely
 for the sake of the delight, soothing &
 refreshment which intimacy with natural
 objects ^{in situ} carries with it. This manner of
 nature knowledge ~~is~~ acquired without
 strain ^{or} effort, hardly made a subject
 of thought, is precisely the anodyne we need
 in these days of overstrain. By the way, I
 have met with nothing so encouraging from
 the point of view of living education as the
 Nature Study exhibition initiated by Mr.
 Medd. The most encouraging points were
 the stress laid in ^{several} ~~many~~ of the very able
 addresses upon nature study ^{qua} nature
 study, as entirely distinct from Science

(Save as it affords the "common information
 which Huxley insisted upon as the found-
 more of Scientific Knowledge): & (the
 amazing discrimination of the judges
 who appear to have preferred, to the most
 effective shows, insignificant exhibits
 which showed simple nature study.
 As for scientific education there is danger
 that we shall be overrun by a sort of
 pseudo, text-book-science. Again, I
 should say, see the Report of the Board
 of Education ^{the Teaching Science in} upon German Schools -
 the splendidly fitted up laboratories are
 coupled with the fact that the student
 merely listen to lectures & witness
 demonstrations. In the early days of
 school life, the course, I should say,
 would be ^{best plan} to have books which
 stimulate Scientific Thought ~~study~~

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Late Professor Jeddies' Chapter in Modern
Professor Thomson's Studies in Animal

Such as Professor Henry Mayr's Studies in
Animal Life, Mr. Brightwell's Studies in Plant
Life, Mr. Fisher's Life of Her Children. There are
many admirable books of the kind ^(b) to get
"Common information" in field (Hedgerow,
Leashore & workshop.

The subject is in manuscript & I am grateful,
Sir, that your interest in Education should
have induced you to allow me so much
space. Among the advantages of the sort
of education I have sketched out, which
we have tried for the last twelve years
with good results, is that it allows of
smaller classes, the pupils being
able to study in groups. The teacher mainly
occupied in directing, suggesting, helping
one or another group to clear up difficulties
testing their work. But the main advantage
is that young people ^{thoroughly} leave school with many
interests which they are capable of pursuing. That they will
show initiative, resourcefulness on all occasions ^{and find}
in life itself as distinct from pleasure-seeking.

"The very thoughts of the people are
merchandise. They have not learned
the common language of Nature."

Quoted from an Indian
Sikh by Cornelia Sombro
Spec. Aug. 9. 1902.